

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE - DONGOLA UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper outlines the results of a survey which was carried out to discover Dongola University students' motivation and attitudes towards learning the English language. The study investigated students' motivation in terms of the different motivational constructs. The students' attitudes, on the other hand, regarding the use of English in social and educational context beside their attitudes towards the English language and the culture of the English speaking world were identified. The sample of the study consisted of 65 students at Dongola University (Faculty of Arts and Human Studies) in different fields of specialization. The researcher used a questionnaire for collecting the data. The findings showed that the Sudanese undergraduates were both instrumentally and integratively motivated, but their instrumental motivation out did their integrative one. It is found that the instrumental motivation got the highest percentage of all the subject results. The subjects admitted learning English because their parents believe that learning English is important for them. For the personal (integrative) type of motivation, the results indicates that it had the least impact on students' English language learning. On the other hand, data for the students' attitudes revealed that most of students had positive attitudes towards the social value and educational status of English.*

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Attitudes, ELT, EFL Context, Dongola University Students, Karima

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### INTRODUCTION

In the field of language learning it is known that different factors may contribute the low ability of the students in English language; these factors may be as a result of their motivation towards English because learners motivation as generally known is a factor that affect the degree of success in 2<sup>nd</sup>/ foreign language learning. The other factor that affect on learning is the students' attitudes; the reason is that motivation is affected by attitudes of the learner in second and foreign language learning.

Therefore, in light of the consistent emphasis of former research on the importance of attitudes and motivation in language learning, and driven by the need to understand the Sudanese students' attitudes and motivation towards learning English, the researcher hopes to contribute to the body of previous research on these essential part of language learning. The researcher also hopes to fill the gap in present research by studying the attitudes and motivation of students at the Faculty of Arts of Dongola university in Karima, Sudan, as, to my knowledge, no similar study targeting this population has been found.

### STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The students of Faculty of Arts and Human Studies, University of Dongola study four compulsory English language courses as part of the foreign language policy of Sudanese Ministry of High Education. Besides,

some of them study reading text and terminology as a part of their departmental required courses. Their interest, aptitude and motivation for learning English and the chances of success in foreign language depend to a large degree on their motivation and the positive attitudes towards English language. And because the motivation and attitude towards English of the students of Faculty of Arts of Dongola University has not been studied before, it is of relevance to find out the motivation and attitudes of the this population towards English language.

This paper is an analysis of an extensive survey of the language motivation and attitudes of university students in Faculty of Arts (Karima), Dongola University, Sudan. Specifically, the paper examines students' motivation and attitudes towards English which is a foreign language for the study population.

The justification of this research can be found in the opinion of those who work in the education field that attitudes are responsible for the students' responses in the classroom and are both helps in predicting and contributes in students' success in language learning.

Buschenhofen (1998) thinks that while improved instructional materials, syllabus design, and approaches all play a role in improving learner achievement, such achievement is not maximized if the students do not exhibit positive orientation towards their subject.

In addition to this the previous studies shows that there is a clear correlation between motivation and attitudes because motivation is a combination of positive attitudes plus effort and desire.

#### **The Study Addresses the following Questions**

- Do students like English and think it is important.
- Does student attitude differ according to gender; department; years he/ she spent in learning English Language; parents' education; knowing second foreign language; whether or not being abroad?
- Do students feel that a knowledge of English enables them to have access to a greater range of forms of entertainment or types of media?
- How great is English a factor in students' self-esteem?

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims at investigating the motivation and attitudes of the undergraduate students of Faculty of Arts of Dongola University towards English and hence, the specific objective of this study is to discover the motivation and attitudes of the undergraduate students Faculty of Arts of Dongola University towards English.

The main purpose of this research was to survey a significant sample of Dongola university students in Sudan, with the aim of obtaining information regarding their motivation and attitudes towards English.

#### **ASSUMPTION**

- It is expected that most students like English and think it is important.
- It is also expected that students find English language difficult.
- It is likely that students attempt to improve their English, but their efforts are affected by some factors.

- It is likely that they rarely have a chance, if any, to practice their English.
- Knowledge of English enables students to access to different types of entertainment.
- Students' background affect greatly on their attitudes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This part is a review of the literature that is related to the study objectives which includes a short overview of the concepts of motivation and attitudes, and a review of the similar studies.

### Motivation

It is difficult to define the term motivation; according to Gardener (2006) "motivation is very complex phenomenon thus it is not possible to give a simple definition". The reason is that different schools of thoughts view motivation from different points of view.

Regardless of the different viewpoints the three schools emphasized the concept "need", because the achievement of needs is rewarding, requires choices, and in various situations must be interpreted in social circumstance.

The role of motivation in increasing 2<sup>nd</sup>/foreign language learning is unquestionable. Lifrieri (2005) thinks that when most people asked about the factors that affect individual levels of success in any activity they would definitely refer to motivation among them.

According to Brown (2000) the different researches of motivation distinguish between two types of motivation; that is instrumental and integrative. The instrumental motivation is defined by Gardener (1983) as "learning language because of someone or less clearly perceived utility it have for the learner". That means the learner is instrumentally motivated if he wants to learn the language for certain purpose like passing exam or to use it his job ... etc. the second type is integrative motivation, which is learning a language because the learner like to be identified with the society.

The third type of motivation mentioned by Cooper and Fishman (1977) that is the developmental/ personal motivation which refers, according to them, to the one that relates to " personal development or personal satisfaction" (Cooper and Fishman, 1977: 243). These activities like reading books in English and watching films.

### Attitudes

There are different definition for the term attitude, the following are some of these definitions:

Likert (1932) defines it as " an influence which is made on the basis of a complex of belief about the attitude object". While Gardener (1980) defines the term as " the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any particular topic. On the other hand it is considered by Ajzan (1984) as " a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, instinct, or event".

Language attitudes include a wide field of attitudes, values, beliefs and emotions; which are likely to be regarded as some sort natural feeling by the person who holds them.

It is defined by Sarnoff (1970) as a "disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects". Similarly Asmah (1990) defines the term as "the way an individual feels and thinks about something, or someone".

From what is said earlier about the definitions of motivation and attitudes it is clear that there is a close relation between these two variables, and that the persons who have high stimulus towards language learning have positive attitudes towards it.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

There is a good amount of research that has been conducted out worldwide that study the learners' motivation and attitudes towards English language.

A study conducted by Buschenhofen (1998) in Papua New Guinea which assess the students' attitudes between (year 12) learners and the students of the final year in university towards English language. The researcher distributed a questionnaire for both groups equally. The groups were contrasted in terms of their tolerance towards the use of English language in different circumstances. And he comes out with different results which indicated a generally positive attitude towards English language by both groups; and that there are some significance differences in attitudes in relation to certain context. The researcher associated these differences with the changing in social, educational, and linguistic settings that characterize the shift from year 12 to university.

In Malaya a study was carried by Abd Aziz (1994) in which the researcher surveyed 137 of the undergraduate student in UKM to measure their attitudes towards English, the language policy of the university beside how they view the speakers of English language and their point of view towards courses of English language course offered in the university. From the results it is clear that the students had positive attitudes towards the above mentioned issues with the exception of the university English language courses. He also finds that the students attitudes are negative towards the learning of the language.

In Saudi Arabia a study was conducted by Alkaff (2013) which investigated the attitudes and perceptions of Foundation Year (FY) students towards learning English, at the English Language Institute (ELI) of King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. The study attempts to find out the students' opinions regarding the importance of English, whether they think it is difficult or not, and where the difficulty lies. She also attempt to examine the ways by which they try to improve their English and the frequency and areas of their use of the language. After the selection of a random sample of 47 female students of levels 3 and 4 (pre intermediate and intermediate levels), a questionnaire was developed and students' responses were tabulated and analyzed. The study shows that most students have a positive attitude towards learning English and that they try to improve their English and to use the language even though there are a lot of demands on their time and few opportunities to practice their English.

In Yemen a study was conducted by Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) conducted a study that investigates "students' motivation towards learning the English language in faculty of petroleum Engineering regarding the use of English in the yamani educational context and educational context. His sample consisted of 81 students. He used questionnaire and interview as tools for collecting his data. The results shows the students' great support of instrumental reasons for learning besides the personal reasons as motives; on the other hand data showed that most of the students had positive attitudes towards social values and educational status besides the students' positive orientation toward English language.

## Methodology

### The Study

English, in addition to other subjects, is compulsory for Faculty of Arts students at University of Dongola.

The students must pass four levels of general English courses in four years. These courses are taught in four years, which translate into 2 hours a week. The study included 65 arts students. The sample was randomly selected from levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. The participants answered a questionnaire which was carefully developed to address the research questions. Some of the statements/questions were adapted from previous literature and the rest were devised by the researcher to suit the present study. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part had 10 questions about the students information. The second and the third parts which had 15 and 9 statements successively, utilized the Likert scale, asking the students to choose one of the following responses as appropriate for them: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to ensure optimal understanding among all students and to eliminate any potential language barrier that could prevent them from expressing their full opinions.

The data collected were of two types, i.e. quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative part of the data, the responses were analyzed, tabulated and the percentages were calculated. Descriptive statistic method is used for analyzing the data that is collected by the questionnaire which is divided into several parts. The total responses for each item is then changed into percentage.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following sections discusses *the result of the study*. It is an account of the demographic summary of the subjects followed by a discussion on attitudes and motivation towards English Language of the students at Faculty of Arts – Dongola Univesity.

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The total number of respondents of this study was 65. All of them were undergraduate students of Faculty of Arts of Dongola University. They belonged to the following departments:

Folklore, Archaeology, Geography, History, Arabic Language, English Language, Islamic Studies, Information and Libraries, and Sociology beside the first year students.

The distribution of the respondents as per Discipline is given in table 1 below followed by the distribution according to level and sex in table 2:

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents as per Discipline**

Discipline	Total Respondent	Percentage
Folklore	7	10.8
Archaeology	9	13.8
Geography	9	13.8
History	5	7.8
Arabic Language	5	7.8
English Language	4	6.1
Islamic Studies	2	3.0
Information and Libraries	7	10.8
Sociology	9	13.8
First year	8	12.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Level and Sex**

Level	Male	Female	Total	%
First	3	5	8	12.3
Second	8	14	22	33.9
Third	6	8	14	21.5
Fourth	12	9	21	32.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Shows the Participants' Background**

Item no.	Statement	Yes	No	Total
7	Native speaker teacher (s)	13	51	64
		20.3%	79.7%	100%
8	Parents know English	27	38	65
		41.54%	58.46%	100%
9	Native speaker friend(s)	25	40	65
		38.46%	61.54	100%
10	Spent Time in English speaking country	6	59	65
		9.23%	90.76%	100%

### Attitudes Towards English Language

Respondents' attitudes towards English language were obtained through the use of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 5= strongly agree (SA), 4= agree (A), 3= neutral (N), 2=disagree (DA), and 1= strongly disagree (SDA). The respondents were asked to provide their opinion on 24 statements regarding their attitudes towards English language.

Among the statements, the first four statements elicited respondents' perception and impression about English and their responses about liking and disliking of English language which is shown in table 2 below. 69.62% respondents strongly agreed and 27.85% of them agreed that they like speaking English. The majority of the respondents (30.38% strongly agreed and 36.71% agreed) stated that someone seems to be educated when one speaks English. In the same line the majority of them (29.11% strongly agreed and 40.51% agreed) stated that when someone speaks English it creates a good impression for him. Respondents liking of English language as well as the speakers of English language were counter checked through the statement no. 4. A majority number of the respondents (31.65% disagreed and 50.63% strongly disagreed) stated with disagreement that they dislike people who speak to them in English. It indicates that respondents has positive attitudes towards English language and those who speak English. For this reason it seems that the students have positive attitudes towards English language.

**Table 4: Students' Results Regarding their Attitudes**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1.	English is an international language.	49	12	2	1	1
		75.4%	18.5%	3.1%	1.5%	1.5%
2.	English is the language used most widely in the world.	38	10	8	8	1
		58.5%	15.4%	12.3%	12.3%	1.5%
3.	Knowing English is important in understanding people from other countries	49	10	2	2	1
		75.4%	15.4%	3.1%	3.1%	1.5%
4.	Knowing English is important in understanding the cultures of English-speaking countries, like U.S.A. or U.K.	46	14	2	2	1
		70.8%	21.5%	3.1%	3.1%	1.5%
5.	If I have a chance, I would like to travel to English-speaking countries, like U.S.A. or U.K.	40	13	6	5	1
		61.6%	20%	9.2%	7.7%	1.5%

When asked about English language the majority think that it is an international language and have positive attitudes towards English (93.9%), spoken worldwide (73.9%), it is important in understanding the people of the English speaking countries (90.8%) and their culture (92.3%) and would like having a chance to travel to these countries (81.6%). Table (4) above.

**Table 5: Students' Results Regarding their Attitudes**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
6.	The use of English in government and business offices helps in getting things done easily.	26	21	5	9	3
		40%	32.3%	7.7%	13.9%	4.6%
7.	When I hear someone speaks English well, I wish I could speak like him.	52	8	3	-	2
		80%	12.3%	4.6%	00.0%	3.1%
8.	The non-native English speakers can also speak Standard English. (Here, Standard English refers to English spoken in the English-speaking countries.)	26	19	12	5	1
		40%	29.2%	18.5%	7.7%	1.5%

It is clear from table (5) above that the students have cognitive attitudes towards English Language because they think that using English in government and business office will help in getting things done easily (72.3%), when they hear someone speaks English well they wish they speak like him (92.3%), and that non-native speakers can also speak standard English (69.2%)

**Table 6: Students' Results Regarding their Attitudes**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
9.	English should not be a compulsory subject in secondary schools in Sudan.	15	7	13	11	18
		23.1%	10.8%	20%	16.9%	27.7%
10.	English should be the medium of instruction in the secondary schools in Sudan.	25	14	15	7	3
		38.5%	21.5%	23.1%	10.8%	4.6%
11.	The development of our country is possible mainly by educated people who know English well.	32	12	7	9	3
		49.2%	18.5%	10.8%	13.8%	4.6%

In table (6) above, concerning their view about teaching English as a compulsory subject in secondary school the percentage was not high (33.9%), while those who support using English as a medium of instruction in secondary school are a little bit higher (59%) but a noticeable number are neutral to this statement (23.1%), regarding their agreement to the idea that educated people who speak English are tools of development was high (67.7%)

**Table 7: Students' Results Regarding their Attitudes**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
12.	English films are more enjoyable than films in any other language.	31	12	7	10	4
		47.7%	18.5%	10.8%	15.3%	6.2%

Concerning the subjects view about English films; it is found that the majority of them enjoy these films (66.2%) which is an affective attitude (Table 7).

**Table 8: Students' Results Regarding their Attitudes**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
13.	I am not confident in speaking English because of my Sudanese accent.	18	16	7	15	9
		27.7%	24.6%	10.8%	23.1%	13.8%
14.	When I speak English, I want to sound like a native speaker.	43	12	6	1	2
		66.2%	18.5%	9.2%	1.5%	3.1%
15.	I do not like learning English.	4	1	7	13	40
		6.2%	1.5%	10.8%	20%	61.5%

From the subject responses in table (8) above, it is clear that remarkable number of them are not confident enough about their Sudanese accent (52.3%), this go with the idea that they want to sound like native speakers which is very high (84.7%) which are cognitive attitudes (items 13 and 14). It is found also that (81.5%) disagree with the statement that they do not like learning English (item 15) which shows that the majority of them has a positive affective attitudes towards learning English language.

#### **Students' Results Regarding their Motivation (Instrumental – Integrative – Developmental (Personal))**

**Table 9: Instrumental Motivation**

No	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
16.	In Sudan, knowing English is more useful than knowing any other foreign language	38	12	8	5	2
		58.5%	18.5%	12.3%	7.7%	3.1%
17.	Learning English is important for me, because English is a very useful tool in contemporary society.	44	16	3	2	-
		67.7%	24.6%	4.6%	3.1%	0%

In table (9) above 77% of the students think that learning English is more useful than knowing any other foreign language, while 92.3% of them consider English is a very useful tool in contemporary society; which are instrumental motivations.

**Table 10: Developmental Motivation**

18.	An Important Purpose for my English Learning is to Get a Decent Job.	20	10	s18	9	7
		30.8%	15.3%	27.7%	13.8%	10.8%

From table (10) above it is clear that the developmental motivation is low in which we find that 46.1% of the subjects said that an important purpose for their English learning is to get a decent job, while 27.7% are neutral towards this statement.

**Table 11: Instrumental Motivation**

19.	Before Entering University, an Important Purpose for my English Learning Was to Obtain High Scores in the National Secondary School Examination.	21	14	8	16	6
		32.3%	21.5%	12.3%	24.6%	9.2%
20.	An important purpose for my English learning is to obtain a university degree.	16	12	10	16	10
		24.6%	18.5%	15.3%	24.6%	15.3%
21.	I learn English to catch up with economic and technological developments in the world.	34	21	6	2	1
		52.3%	32.3%	9.2%	3.1%	1.5%
22.	I learn English in order to obtain better education and job opportunities abroad.	27	13	11	12	2
		41.5%	20%	16.9%	18.5%	3.1%



From table (11) above it is clear that the students' instrumental motivation is low. The purpose of 53.8% of them for learning was to obtain high scores in the National Secondary School Examination (item 19), 43.1% is to obtain a university degree (item 20), and 61.5% is to obtain better education and job opportunities abroad (item 22); while 84.6% of them learn English to catch up with economic and technological developments in the world (item 21).

**Table 12: Integrative Motivation**

23.	I Learn English So That I Can go Abroad to Experience English Speaking Cultures	27	17	12	6	1
		41.5%	26.2%	18.5%	9.2%	1.5%

From table (12) above 67.7% of the students said that they learn English because it helps them go abroad and experience English speaking cultures; which is an integrative motivation.

**Table 13: Developmental Motivation**

24.	My Parents Believe that Learning English is Important	33	18	10	1	1
		50.8%	27.7%	15.3%	1.5%	1.5%

From table (13) above it is clear that part of the source of students' motivation is from their parents. 78.5% of the students said that their parents believe that learning English is important.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at studying two of the most significant psychological variables:

The motivation orientations (instrumental, developmental & integrative) of the Sudanese EFL undergraduates and their attitudes towards learning the target language and its community. The results of the study provide a sufficient answer to the research questions addressed, and showed that the Sudanese undergraduates were both instrumentally and integratively motivated, but their instrumental motivation out did their integrative one with a discrepancy exceeds in value or influence in favour of the instrumental motivations.

It is found that the instrumental motivation (item 17 table 9 & item 21 table 11) got the highest percentage of all the subject results, for example the students highly favour learning English because it is a very useful tool in contemporary society and that English helps them to catch up with economic and technological development in the world.

Next to instrumental motivation, developmental motivation (item 24) comes the second source of motivation. The subjects admitted learning English because their parents believe that learning English is important for them.

For the personal (integrative) type of motivation, the results in table (13) indicates that it had the least impact on students' English language learning.

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